

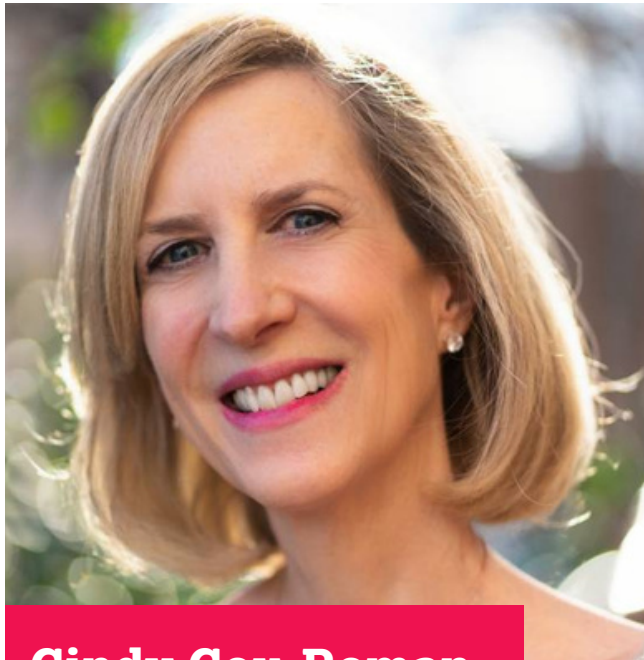
# 2024 Annual Report



**HelpAge**  
USA

*Supporting  
an aging world*

# From the CEO



**Cindy Cox-Roman**  
CEO & President

2024 has been an extraordinary year of growth and impact for HelpAge USA. Guided by our mission to ensure that older people everywhere lead dignified, secure, and fulfilled lives, we launched transformative initiatives, deepened our global impact, and remained steadfast in our commitment to age-inclusive humanitarian action. Thanks to our generous donors, we have helped thousands of older Ukrainians feel cared for and less alone. We've also stepped up our advocacy to ensure that U.S. government policies are inclusive of older people in humanitarian crises.

In the U.S., we launched Friendship Bench DC, an innovative program that brings older adults to the forefront of mental health support. With their wisdom and lived experience, our Grandparents

provide empathetic listening and problem-solving support to individuals of all ages in their communities. This program, inspired by a model from Zimbabwe, is helping to reimagine how we address mental health, break stigma, and foster intergenerational connection.

At HelpAge USA, we believe that older people are agents of change, not just beneficiaries of it. With your support, we've been able to amplify their voices, honor their resilience, and build a world that truly values their contributions. Thank you for standing with us in this mission. Together, we're making an age-inclusive future a reality.

*Cindy Cox-Roman*

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Our vision is a world in which all people can lead dignified, healthy, and secure lives, regardless of how old they are or where they live.

## **Vision**

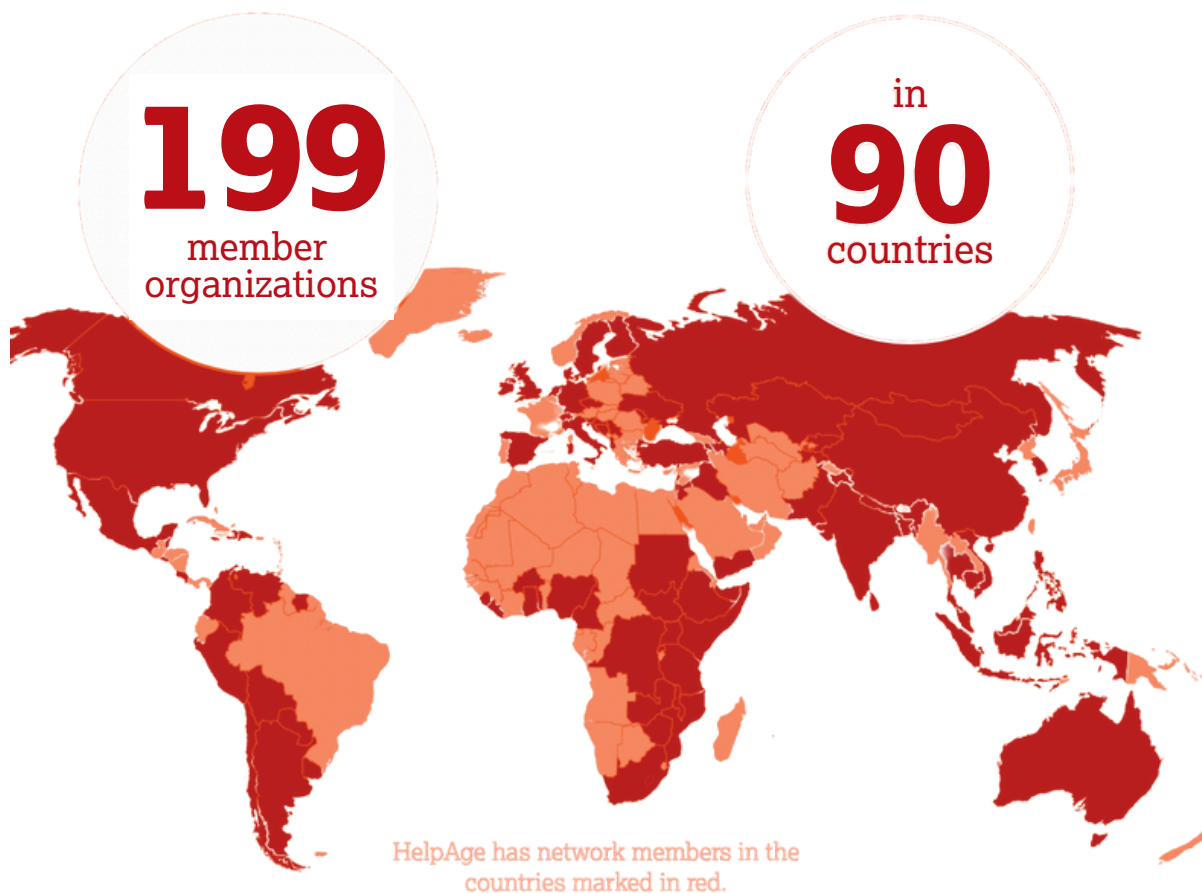
## **Mission**

HelpAge USA advances the dignity and potential of older people around the world through research, advocacy, and programs. We work in the U.S. and with our HelpAge global network partners in more than 90 countries to improve lives in the world's poorest communities. Our goal is to ensure that the contributions of all older people are recognized, and they have the right to a healthy, safe, and secure life.



# Global Network

As a member of the HelpAge global network, HelpAge USA works with our partners around the world to raise funds, deliver programs, and elevate the voices of older people through advocacy and campaigns.



2.2 million older people accessed health and care services because of our work.



1 million people were directly supported by our humanitarian work, of which 51% were older people.



7,700 Older People's Associations were supported by HelpAge, with 405,000 older people as members.



3.3 million older people in 9 countries accessed financial support, including social pensions.



19 new or reformed laws and policies that protect older people's rights were introduced in 6 countries as a result of our advocacy.



10,800 people received training in aspects of our technical work.


# Program Highlights

## Friendship Bench DC

Friendship Bench DC is a program of HelpAge USA that seeks to address the mental health crisis, with a focus on underserved communities in Washington, DC.

Supported by HelpAge USA, a group of older people from historically Black neighborhoods in DC—who had originally come together to encourage loved ones to get vaccinated during COVID-19—set out to address the mental health crisis impacting their friends and neighbors by piloting a proven model for delivering community-based mental health support. Known as the Friendship Bench, this model was developed by psychiatrist Dr. Dixon Chibanda to address the lack of access to mental health care in his native Zimbabwe. It works by training older people ("Grandparents") to provide basic talk therapy to people of all ages on wooden "Friendship Benches" situated in safe spaces within communities—effectively addressing anxiety and depression.

Since its launch in July 2024, Friendship Bench DC has expanded to Host Partner locations around Washington, DC, including senior wellness centers, schools, places of worship, and other nonprofit organizations that provide a Friendship Bench to the people they serve. Community members of all ages can schedule an appointment to meet with a trained Friendship Bench DC Grandparent at one of these safe community spaces. All Friendship Bench DC sessions are free of charge and provide a confidential, non-judgmental place where individuals can connect with an older person for a compassionate ear and problem-solving support.

Learn more about Friendship Bench DC and see our current list of Host Partners at [helpageusa.org/friendshipbench/](https://helpageusa.org/friendshipbench/). 



"Friendship Bench DC is an innovative approach to providing a much-needed service to our community. A place where you can build a trusted relationship with a 'Grandparent' with compassion. I feel the Friendship Bench is an opportunity for both the Visitors and the Grandparents. We are helping our community become healthier by being there for each other."

*Scarlett S., Friendship Bench DC Grandparent*

# Advocacy Updates



- At HelpAge USA, we're proud to champion a world where aging is recognized as a global priority. Senator Tim Kaine, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, requested the first-ever Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on how global aging impacts U.S. foreign assistance, policies, and national security. This initiative reflects HelpAge USA's advocacy with Congress for stronger inclusion of older people in U.S. international policies and programs.



- This year, we celebrated a historic moment as the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing adopted a substantive decision addressing gaps in international human rights and older people and recommending a new UN convention, as one key option for ensuring older people's rights around the world. This milestone reflects years of advocacy by HelpAge and its global network members to advance global legal protections for older people.



- At the request of Congress, USAID and the State Department submitted a report on their efforts to include older people in humanitarian, refugee, development, and security assistance and programming. This Congressional oversight resulted from advocacy efforts to include key language regarding reporting in the FY24 Appropriations bill. We also celebrated the inclusion of a request from Congress for dedicated funding for older people in the FY2025 Appropriations bill.



- HelpAge USA was invited to participate on a prestigious panel at the Council on Foreign Relations to discuss the rights of older people, ageism, and the need for U.S. foreign policy to address global aging. The panel, moderated by MSNBC's Ali Velshi, also included population and aging experts Dr. Jennifer Sciubba and Professor Andrew J. Scott and underscored the urgency of responding to a rapidly aging world.



- HelpAge USA, together with AARP, Amnesty International USA, and the University of Southern California's Institute on Inequalities in Global Health, convened a roundtable to discuss global population aging and its implications for U.S. foreign policy with experts from a wide range of U.S. government agencies. There were attendees from the National Security Council, State Department, USAID, NAM, National Institute on Aging, Department of Health and Human Services Office of Global Affairs, White House Gender Policy Council, and Congressional staff.



- HelpAge engaged in critical advocacy efforts to prioritize older people's participation and rights in Ukraine's recovery. At two events hosted by the UK government in New York City and Washington, DC, Viktoriia Panchenko from HelpAge Ukraine provided compelling remarks drawing on her first-hand experience supporting humanitarian response for older Ukrainians.

## Project Spotlight

# Ukraine

Ukraine has the largest number of older people affected by conflict anywhere in the world—25% of the population. Many of them remain in or near conflict zones due to disability, poverty, or lack of opportunity. As a result, they are often left to navigate the devastating conditions without reliable access to electricity, clean water, food, medications, or connection with family. The war has had a significant impact on older people, and—whether they flee or remain—they are at risk of violence, hunger, and neglect. Since February 2022, HelpAge has supported more than 140,000 people in Ukraine working with 51 local organizations.

### Palliative Care

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, older people with serious illnesses have been left especially at-risk. Many of them face not only the hardships of displacement and war but also the challenges of managing chronic and life-threatening conditions. With a grant from GlobalGiving, we carried out a project to impact the lives of older Ukrainians—particularly those who are isolated, have disabilities, or are facing serious illness. By providing palliative care training and services, we not only responded to the immediate needs of older Ukrainians but came together to help build a more compassionate and inclusive humanitarian response.

### Community Safe Spaces

In the heart of Ukraine, HelpAge USA is making a profound impact through four Community Safe Spaces, which supported more than 8,094 older people in 2024. These safe havens offer displaced older Ukrainians a place to connect with others, take classes, exercise, access health care, receive mental health services, and more. They also have opportunities to get to know their new communities through guided tours introducing them to local services or trips to learn about local history and culture. From improving digital literacy to ensuring psychosocial support, our generous donors have helped make a tangible difference for older Ukrainians when they needed it most.



“I felt forgotten and helpless. But when the HelpAge team came, they brought me everything I needed—medicine, care, and even a special mattress that helped with my bedsores.”

*Galyna, 82, Ukraine*

## Project Spotlight

# Ethiopia

In the Gambella region of Ethiopia, South Sudanese refugees face numerous challenges, from inadequate living conditions to limited access to essential services.

In response to these urgent needs, HelpAge USA, in partnership with Plan International USA and the Rehabilitation and Development Organization, worked with HelpAge International to implement a comprehensive project to provide lifesaving protection and education services to the most-at-risk refugees living in the Nguenyyiel and Kule camps of the Gambella region in Ethiopia. The project was made possible with a grant from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Launched in September 2022 and concluding in September 2024, the project aimed to improve the living conditions and protection of both refugees and their host communities—supporting older people and individuals with disabilities through continuous home-based care services, training, aid, community mobilization, and advocacy in constant collaboration and consultation with Older People's Associations (OPAs). The project placed a special focus on older adults and people with disabilities, ensuring their unique needs were prioritized and included in the humanitarian response agenda.

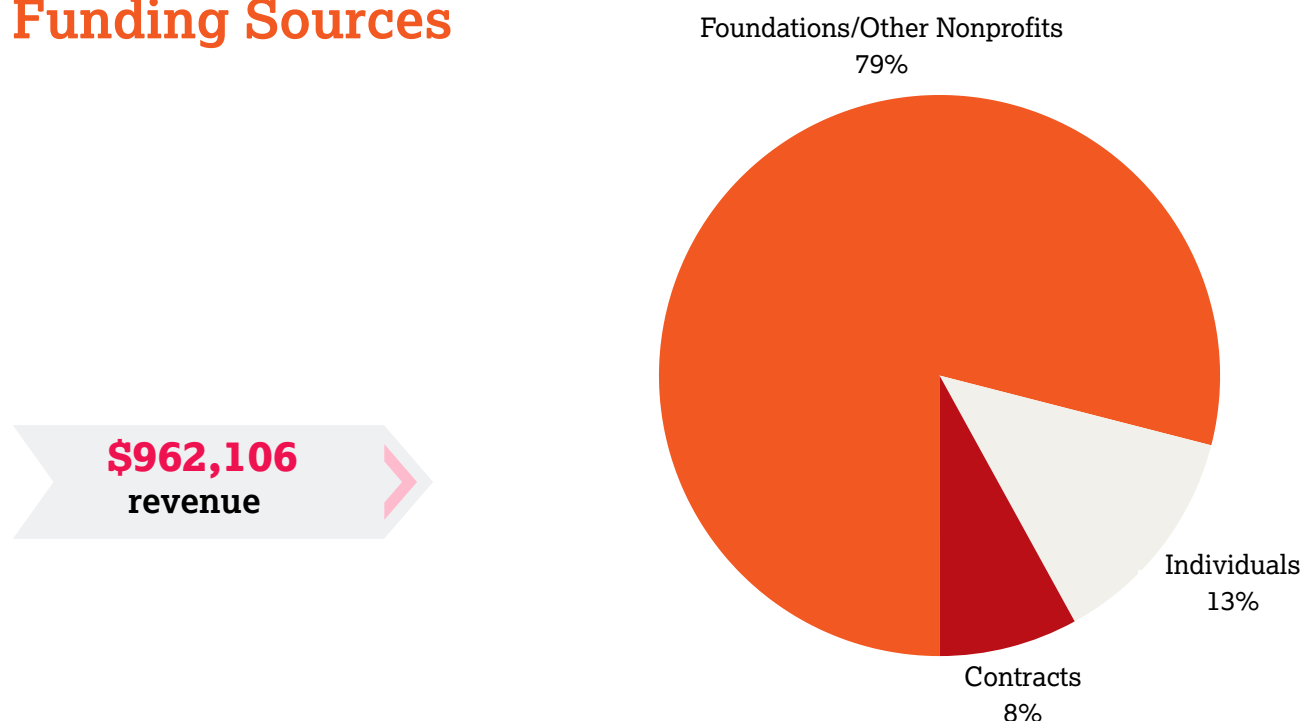
Over the past two years, this initiative positively impacted 20,553 individuals—including 8,251 men and 12,302 women. Among these, 2,085 were people with disabilities.



Did you know? The project went beyond immediate support by empowering community members on the ground and enabling older people themselves to create lasting change. We provided leadership training for women, boosting their confidence to take on active decision-making roles. At the same time, men received training on reducing gender-based violence (GBV), fostering a culture of respect and equality.

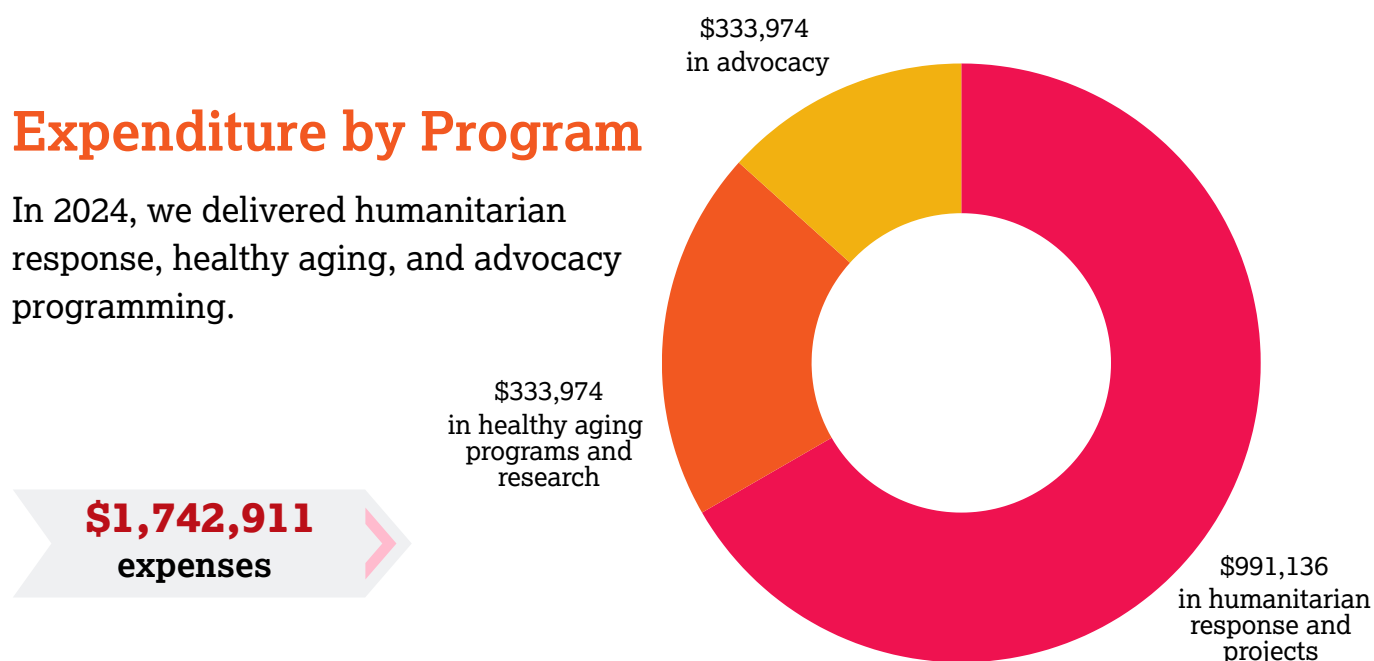
# Financials

## Funding Sources



## Expenditure by Program

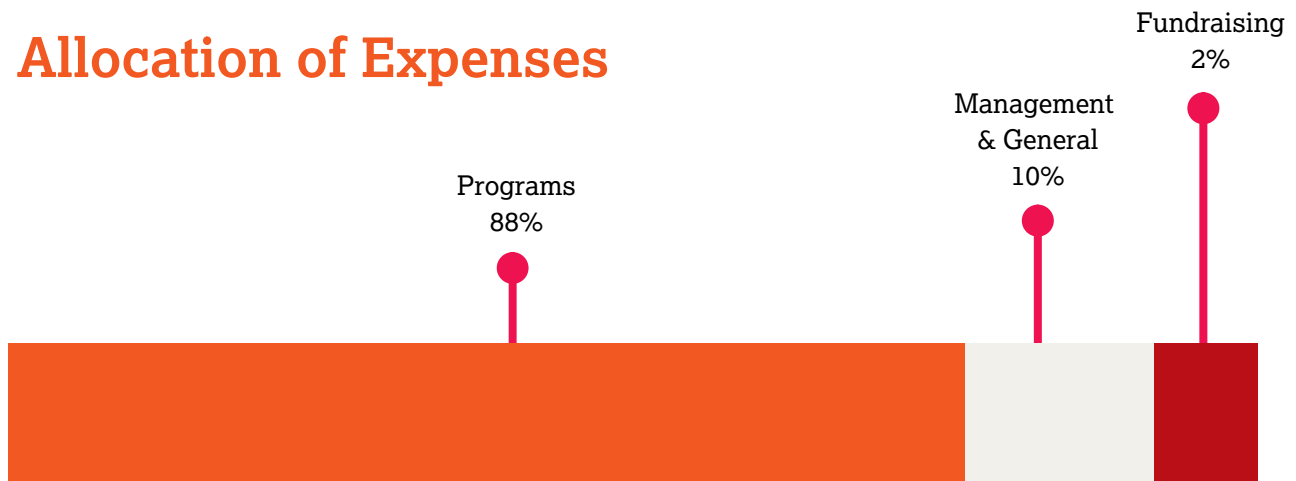
In 2024, we delivered humanitarian response, healthy aging, and advocacy programming.



*The difference between 2024 revenue and expense is covered by restricted revenue recognized in prior years and released in 2024.*

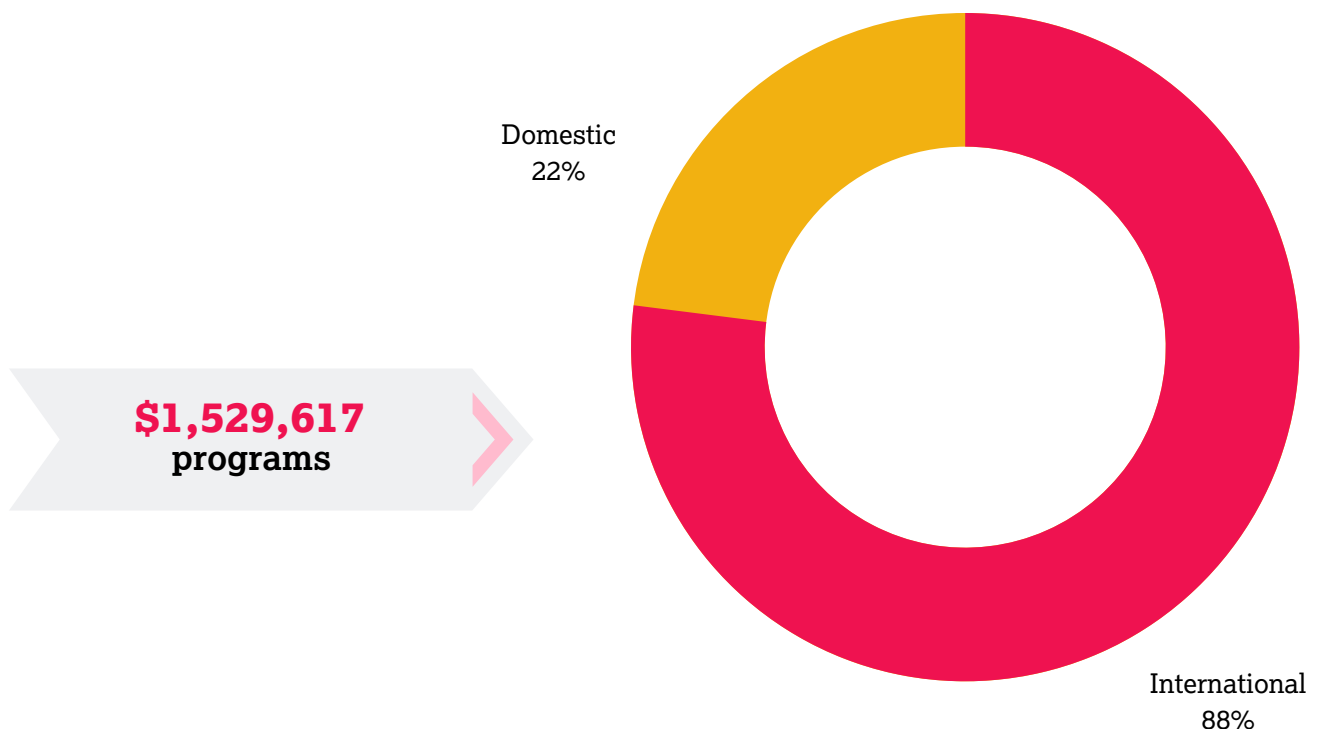
# Financials

## Allocation of Expenses



## Program Expenditure by Region

We supported older people's needs and rights in Ethiopia, Moldova, Morocco, Turkey, and Ukraine. Our work in the U.S. supports healthy aging.



# Governance

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Kyle Salazar, *Co-Board Chair*

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Meredith Light, *Secretary*

Jennie Chin Hansen

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Cindy Cox-Roman, *President & CEO*

Jane Buchanan, *Senior Advocacy Advisor*

Alex Garvey, *Communications Manager*

Jeffrey Prost-Greene, *Program Manager*

Stacy Johnson, *Administrative Assistant*

## Thank you to our Friendship Bench DC Grandparents:



Louise Abercrombie

Mary Akinadewo

Barbara Early Allen

Judy Brown

Sheila Carr

Evelyn Smith-Cureton

Sandi Dotson

Angela Jasper

Theresa Kelly

Tuere Marshall

Anne Miller

Sheila Pannell

Wesley Pinkney

Karen Settles

Scarlett Small

Teresa Smith

Charles Turner

# Donors

## Thank you to our donors!

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Agua Fund	Donald Blumenthal	Kim Mardueno	Ravi Babbellapati
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Alexandra Bezeredi	Donna Cordner	Kurt Tong	RBC Foundation
Alex Garvey	Donna Jackson	Kyle Salazar	Richard Cambridge
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